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ABSTRACT

A look at the educational, economic, and family status of Colorado's Latino, African American, and Native American children reveals alarming problems. Latinos comprise the highest percentage of youth in the state and Whites the lowest. Numbers of young people (under age 19) are expected to increase in Colorado by 12% by 2020, but the increase in Asian youth is projected at 100%, while African American youth are expected to increase by 76% and Latino youth by 45%. African American youth are the least likely of Colorado's young people to live in two-parent homes and the most likely to live in homes headed by women. Nearly half of the Latino and African American people in poverty in Colorado are under the age of 18 (47% and 46%, respectively). Student enrollment rates are similar for all ethnic groups in Colorado, although Native American and Latino youth are more likely not to be enrolled or not to have graduated from high school. Latino and Asian youth are more likely to speak a language other than English. White, Latino, and Native American youth are more likely to participate in Colorado's labor force. These facts demonstrate the obstacles to success faced by minority youth in Colorado, where bilingual and bicultural strengths are often dismissed in educational settings. (Contains 2 tables and 5 charts.) (SLD)

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A PUBLICATION ABOUT LATINOS IN COLORADO

Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA) August, 1995

COLORADO'S YOUTH:
A Social and Economic Overview by Ethnicity

The youth of this country are this nation's future leaders and laborers. They will be leading our government, competing against other countries in research and development, paying taxes, and raising families of their own. However, ethnic minority youth - a diverse and growing segment of the population - are on the edge of crisis. The educational, economic, employment, and family status of Colorado's Latino, African American, and Native American children in particular, reveal alarming problems.

As the baby boom generation ages, this nation's economic health will rely increasingly on the ability of today's youth to compete in a more complex, technical labor market. Unfortunately, ethnic minority youth face obstacles to success. Bilingual and bicultural strengths are dismissed in educational settings. Youth are not completing high school and unemployment is high.

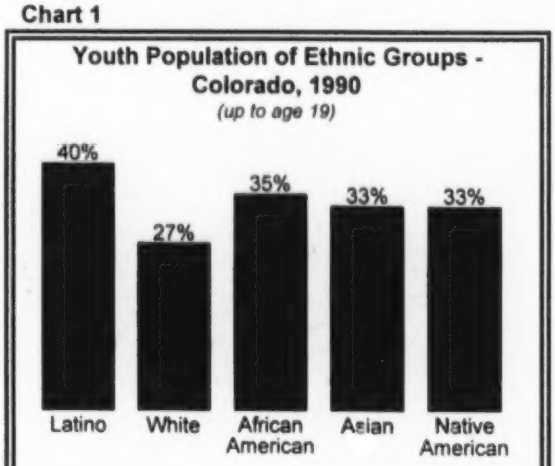
At a time in history when trade agreements are being developed with Mexico, Latin America, Vietnam, and other Asian countries, there are Latino and Asian youth in Colorado that speak a language other than English. These young people have the cultural and linguistic advantage to be future leaders in a world economy if they can overcome the barriers they face.

POPULATION

- **The percentage of youth is highest among Latinos and is lowest among Whites.** Forty percent of Latinos, 35 percent of African Americans, 33 percent of Asians, 33 percent of Native Americans and 27 percent of Whites in Colorado are under the age of 20 (Chart 1).

- **The number of youth (under the age of 19) in Colorado is projected to increase by 12 percent between 1995 and 2020.** The Asian youth is projected to increase 100 percent, doubling in size during this time period. The number of African American youth are projected to increase 76 percent, White youth - 46 percent, and Latino youth 45 percent between 1995 and 2020. It is projected the number of Native American youth will decrease by 20 percent during this time period. (Note: Projections were provided by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.)

Chart 1



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Tables 45 and 128.

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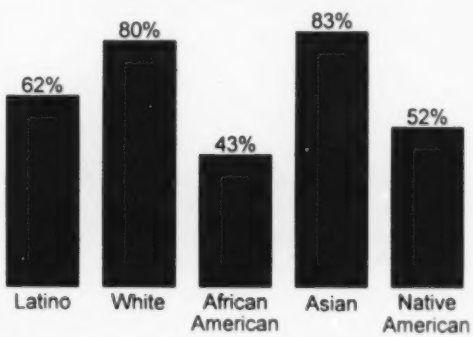
FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

- **African American youth in Colorado are least likely to live in two parent households**. Less than half of African American youth in Colorado (43%) live with two parents (Chart 2). Asian (83%) and White (80%) youth under the age of 18 are most likely to live in two parent households compared to Latino (62%) and Native American (52%) youth.

Chart 2

Persons Under Age 18 Living With Two Parents, Colorado - 1990



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Tables 46 and 128.

- **Single parent families headed by women with children under the age of 18 are more likely to be African American families**. Three times as many African American families with children are headed by women (42%) compared with Asian (14%) and White (15%) families. Of Latino families with children, 27 percent are headed by women; and of Native American families with children, 30 percent are headed by women.

This issue was written by Georgia Pappas, Director of Research and edited by Dr. Maria Guajardo, Executive Director. The LARASA/*REPORT* is published monthly. A one year subscription is $24, reports are $3 each. For more information contact LARASA, 309 W. 1st Ave, Denver, CO 80223, 303-722-5150.

POVERTY

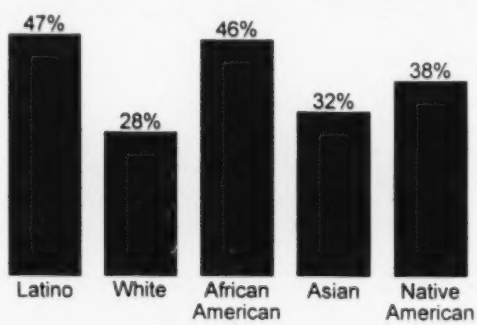
- **Nearly half of Latino and African American persons in poverty are children under the age of 18**. Of Colorado's Latinos and African Americans in poverty, 47 and 46 percent are children, respectively. Among Native Americans in poverty - 38 percent are children; of Asians in poverty - 32 percent are children; and of Whites in poverty - 28 percent are children (Chart 3).

- **Three times as many Latino, Native American, and African families with children live in poverty when compared to Whites.** In Colorado, poverty rates of families with children under 18 years are similar for Native American families (32%), Latino families (30%), and African American families (27%). In comparison, 17 percent of Asian and nine percent of White families with children under 18 live in poverty in Colorado.

- **With the exception of Asian families, the majority of families in poverty with children under 18 are headed by women with no husband present**. Female headed African American families with children have the highest poverty rate of 77 percent. Poverty rates are similar for Latino (56%), White (54%), and Native American (54%) female headed families with children. Asian families with children headed by women had the lowest poverty rate of 32 percent.

Chart 3

Percent of Persons Living in Poverty Who Are Children Under 18 Years - Colorado, 1990



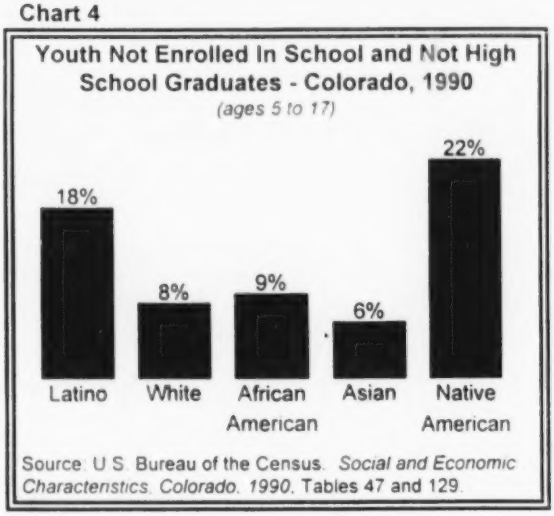
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Tables 54 and 135.

EDUCATION

- **Student enrollment rates of youth, ages 5 to 17, were similar when compared by ethnicity**. The student enrollment rate in Colorado is highest for Asian youth, ages 5 to 17, at 94 percent followed by White youth at 93 percent, Latino youth at 92 percent, African American youth at 92 percent, and Native American youth at 88 percent.

- **Preschool enrollment of young children, ages 3 and 4, is highest among Asian's (32%) and lowest among Latinos (22%) in Colorado**. Preschool enrollment of Whites is 29 percent, African Americans is 26 percent and Native Americans is 25 percent.

Chart 4



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Tables 47 and 129.

- **Native American and Latino youth are twice as likely to not be enrolled in school and not be a high school graduate when compared to Whites, African Americans, and Asians.** Twenty-two percent of Native American and 18 percent of Latino youth (ages 16 to 19) in Colorado are not enrolled in school and have not graduated high school (Chart 4). In comparison, nine percent of African American, eight percent of White and six percent of Asian youth are not being educated.

Labor force statistics of Colorado's youth who are not enrolled in school and did not graduate high school is as follows (Table 1):

- **Employed**: Asian youth had the highest employment rate at 54%, followed by White youth at 47 percent, Latino youth at 42 percent, Native American youth at 41 percent and employment of African American youth not being educated but are employed trailed at 29 percent.

- **Unemployment**: Unemployment rates were similar among Latino (19%), White (19%), African American (20%) and Native American (24%) youth. However, unemployment was five percent for Asian youth who are not being educated.

- **Labor Force**: 50 percent of African American youth, approximately 40 percent of Latino and Asian youth, and approximately one-third of White and Native American youth not in the education system are not in the labor force.

Table 1

Labor Force Status of Youth
Not Enrolled In School and Not High School Graduates - Colorado, 1990
(ages 16 to 19)

	Latino	White	African American	Asian	Native American
Did not graduate/ not enrolled in school	5,468	10,765	735	236	460
Employed	42%	47%	29%	54%	41%
Unemployed	19%	19%	20%	5%	24%
Not in Labor Force	40%	34%	50%	42%	35%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Table 47.

Table 2

Ability of Youth to Speak English - Colorado, 1990 (ages 5 to 17)					
	Latino	White	African American	Asian	Native American
Youth 5 to 17 years	105,881	457,996	27,132	11,865	4,594
Speak a language other than English	27%	3%	5%	54%	13%
Do not speak English "very well"	10%	1%	1%	23%	5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Social and Economic Characteristics, Colorado, 1990*, Tables 45 and 129.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

- **Latino and Asian youth are more likely to speak a language other than English.** Over half of Asian youth (ages 5 to 17) in Colorado speak a language other than English (54%) (Table 2). In comparison 27 percent of Latino youth and 13 percent of Native American youth speak a language other than English. White and African American youth are most likely to be monolingual English speakers. Only three percent of White youth and five percent of African American youth speak a language other than English.

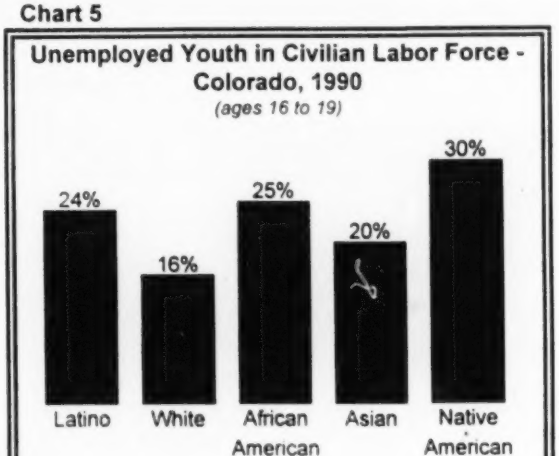
- **Asian youth more likely do not speak English "very well" compared to Latino youth.** Nearly one-fourth (23%) of Asian youth (ages 5 to 17) do not speak English "very well" compared to ten percent of Latino youth (Table 2).

LABOR FORCE

- **White, Latino, and Native American youth are more likely to participate in the labor force.** Half of White (53%), Latino (51%), and Native American (51%) youth, ages 16 to 19, were part of the civilian labor force. In comparison, fewer African American youth (39%) and Asian youth (37%) were part of the civilian labor force. The civilian labor force does not include persons enlisted in the military.

- **Despite an equal proportion of youth in the labor force among Whites, Latinos and Native Americans, nearly twice the rate of Native American youth and 1.5 times the rate of Latino and African American youth were unemployed compared to White youth.** Native American youth (ages 16 to 19) had the highest unemployment rate of 30 percent followed by African American youth at 25 percent, Latino youth at 24 percent, Asian youth at 20 percent, and White youth with the lowest rate at 16 percent (Chart 5).

Chart 5



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